
PROGRAMME EDITING

Looking at the reasons and ethics of editing.

The process of editing allows us to make changes to what we have already recorded without the need to record it all over again. This can be done in several ways, but for this course we will be concentrating on using computers for editing.

Let us look first at some of the reasons for editing:

WHY EDIT?

Editing has four main purposes:

1. Timing - to cut the item to the required length.
2. Removing faults - to take out mistakes, coughs, hesitations, noises, etc.
3. Changing the sequence of items - this may help it to flow better.
4. Creating a new sequence - by putting together items recorded separately.

Editing allows us to work on what we have already recorded and improve it. We can make it flow better, take out anything which doesn't make sense, add in sound effects, make it more concise... It makes it possible for us to take pre-recorded materials from separate sources and put them together in a creative manner.

It is often necessary to prepare separate insert items in order, to be used later in another recording - for instance when making a magazine or documentary. Editing may also be used to lift out a short segment of a programme and make it into a separate entity, such as a trailer giving a taste of what will be coming later on when the whole programme is broadcast.

- **Almost any programme can be improved by editing!**

THE ETHICS OF EDITING

Editing is a very useful tool in that it enables us to make changes to what was recorded. However it is a very dangerous tool because of that very fact. It is all too easy to completely change the meaning of what is said by editing, and this is where we need to be careful. Editing must not be used to alter the sense of what was said or to place the material within a context for which it was never intended.

When editing, care has to be taken not to change the meaning of what was said. If someone has given an interview or made a statement it is very important that he is not made even to appear to be saying something different. Careless editing can easily make a statement stronger (or weaker) than it was ever meant to be.

Take the example on next page: When editing out all the comments not in bold type it changes the meaning completely.

EXAMPLE

Reporter “Are you in favour of the death penalty?”

Interviewee: That's very difficult to say./**yes...**/ I suppose so, under certain circumstances, but it's an awful thing to take a life, whatever that person has done. When you're dealing with/ **murderers and rapists who will probably kill and rape all over again as soon as they're released.**./ I don't know, maybe/ **they should be executed.**./ But there are always those who are genuinely sorry for what they've done and are serving their time - while there's life there's hope. They might change. But it's the others,/ **the maniacs and fanatics who can't stop killing - they're a menace to us all,**./ but on the other hand, that's what prisons are for, isn't it?

If you edit the interviewee's answer to leave only the words in bold it becomes “**yes... murderers and rapists who will probably kill and rape all over again as soon as they're released... they should be executed. The maniacs and fanatics who can't stop killing - they're a menace to us all.**” We now have a strong call for the death penalty, but that is not what the interviewee was saying. This kind of editing can never be justified.

The problem is most likely to arise when faced with the need to cut your material down to a given length. It can be very difficult to decide on what to leave in and what to take out.

Whatever you do make sure you do not change the sense of what was said.